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SHOULD WOMEN STUDY THE CLASSICS?

*OPENING LECTURE OF THE ARTS COURSE AT
QUEEN MARGARET COLLEGE, GLASGOW,*

NOVEMBER 3rd, 1891.

BY

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SHOULD WOMEN STUDY THE CLASSICS ?

WHEN I was invited by your Council, not many days ago, to deliver the opening lecture for the Arts Course at Queen Margaret's, my first reply was that owing to various engagements it was impossible for me, in the time, to write anything worthy of the occasion. But, on second thoughts, I preferred to show my sympathy with the objects of this College in however imperfect a manner, by complying at once with the invitation of your Council, rather than wait for some future opportunity of putting before you in a more finished form my views of the objects which you should aim at in the studies of this place, and of the connection which those studies should have with the work of your future lives. I set a high value upon the work which this College has already done, and have high hopes as to that which it has yet to do. I have the deepest sympathy with the movement for raising the education of women to which this College, and similar Colleges elsewhere, owe their origin. That movement is one of the noblest movements, most

rich in promise of future blessing, of all the movements of our time; and it is impossible that one whose life has been spent in the work of educating men, should not rejoice to find it in his power to give it a helping hand.

Your Secretary, indeed, in kindness, suggested that I might bring out some veteran lecture out of a musty drawer to do service on this occasion; but you will, I am sure, forgive me if I prefer to address to you a few fresh words, however imperfect they may be, on a subject which, in my opinion, much needs rational and practical discussion at the present moment. What is the proper place of the Classics in the education of women?

Some place in female education the Classics already *have* acquired; for, at this moment, the tendency of female education is all in the direction of assimilation to male education. Every school, every college, which aims at the higher education of women, puts Classics and Mathematics in the forefront; almost all are making efforts towards the teaching of Science, History, Literature and Modern Languages, never yet very successfully taught to boys, are being taught on similar methods to girls. The educational feature of the age has been a throwing down of the intellectual barriers between man and woman, a throwing open to women of intellectual aims and ambitions heretofore confined to men; and what seems curious at first sight is this, that the Classics have been finding their way into the female curriculum at

the very moment when they seemed likely to be slipping out, in whole or part, of the male curriculum.

But, in reality, these two movements are converging, rather than opposed, movements. They have their origin in the same cause. It has been discovered, rather late in the day, that there are no such intellectual distinctions as used to be taken for granted between men and women ; and that, in consequence, there is no intellectual pursuit which need remain, on the mere score of difficulty, a sealed book to woman, if she have a mind for it, and if it be suited to her future requirements. Once more has the old proverb been found true: What is sauce for the gander, is sauce for the goose also.

Hence, just as it has been recognized that there are certain male minds unsuited for the severer studies, certain male callings for which those studies are not indispensable ; so it has been made apparent, by some conspicuous examples, that there are certain female minds which can draw their whole value out of the severest studies, certain female lives to which these may prove the richest and most graceful ornament. The process, on both sides, is one of assimilation ; differences of mind, whether in men or women, will, under all circumstances, call for different modes of treatment ; so our question is no longer whether Classics, Mathematics, Science, should be taught to women, but to what women, with a view to what lives, for what exact purposes, and to what extent respectively, should they be taught ?

At the outset of this inquiry we meet with one

consoling fact: we may pursue it without the terror of the so-called Practical Man for ever before our eyes. Almost everywhere nowadays—most of all in a commercial city like this—it is impossible even to discuss the question of culture and education without being told authoritatively by that personage ‘Now, mind, I respect your theories; I’ve a great respect for Latin and Greek, and for all your ’ologies, and I want my son to get all the good he can out of College while he is there. But he has to make his way in the world; he must take, if he can, some money out of it; you must not unfit him for becoming a business man; and he must be done with the University before he is twenty. Teach him what you like, only teach him something that will pay.’

The simple culture of the mind for its own sake—the mere perfecting of the man—is, alas! but seldom considered among the ‘things that pay’; so in the rush forward to grasp the means of living—often, no doubt, a matter of sheer necessity—the acquisition of that which makes life worth living is too often pushed aside altogether. Not so as yet, happily, with girls. The claims of women, doubtless, to enter some of the professions, notably two of the most intellectual of the professions—those of Teaching and of Medicine—have been amongst the causes which have pressed on the higher education of women; but the movement has had a far broader base than this; and even in regard to these two callings, women have rather pressed for admission into them because they

were qualified, than scrambled through a qualification because they were anxious to enter them.

Not long ago our learned Principal, half in irony, half in earnest, devoted part of his Closing Address to the task of demonstrating to a too-believing world that, if it wanted to get on in life, the University was about the last place to come to for the purpose ; he seemed almost to imply—if he did, I do not share his opinion—that the University rather unfitted a man for mere success. Such doctrine, I am sure, he would not have addressed to a University of women, or to a College of women aspiring to be admitted to University degrees. Here, at least, indifferent to mere considerations of L. s. d., we may ask the questions which are alone worth the asking :—What is Culture ? What are its constituent elements ? Through what studies, by what discipline, in any particular case, are those elements most likely to be secured, and made abiding elements, perennial sources of light and happiness and influence, in the life and character of the future woman ?

For that must be our aim, ever kept in view—*the life and character of the future woman*. The culture we aim at is not to be cast off with short dresses and long hair ; and it is to be used for ends suitable for *women*, not necessarily suitable for men. We have no sympathy with the ‘Wild Woman’ assailed with a frenzy of bad language—bad enough for any man to use—by Mrs. Lynn Linton in the *Nineteenth Century* for October ; nor because we be-

lieve that women are the intellectual equals of men, do we for that reason believe that their culture consists in making them counterfeits or replicas of men. Our aim is woman's culture, pursued with a full sense of all the differences of character, of physique, and of future life, which will ever make women as essentially, in their nature, different from men, as they are actually, in their lives, indispensable to them.

But what is culture? can it be defined and labelled? can any one say that there is any one thing, in heaven or earth, absolutely indispensable to it? I think not. There are many things which we all feel are contained in it; which must be present in it, more or less; yet each one of these in certain cases may be absent, or largely absent, without destroying the beauty of the whole. One important element in it, no doubt, is knowledge; wide knowledge, appreciative, discriminating knowledge; but knowledge alone is not culture. Some cultivated persons have read little, but have read that little in the right way, with the right spirit and the right motive, and know how to make the right use of it; others may have read much, and yet not be cultivated at all.

In addition to knowledge, there must be some systematic discipline in one or more organically built up subjects of study; but logical habits of thought by themselves do not constitute culture; and when a few days ago I read, in a Report by the Committee of our University Council, a passage postulating that culture was but another

name for 'disciplined habits of thought,' I said, 'Culture is nothing of the kind.' On that principle, every man or woman who pursues a calling systematically is cultured; the driver of a locomotive; the keeper of a signal-box; the speculator on the stock exchange, all need 'habits of disciplined thought'; the skilful pickpocket, who knows exactly how to evade the policeman; the still more skilful detective, who knows where to lay his hand on the pickpocket; the manager of a political caucus; the croupier of a bank at Monte Carlo; all these, on that principle, would be, *ex officio*, cultured persons. In addition to knowledge and discipline, culture implies a refinement of the feelings; an education of the taste; a certain indefinable delicacy of perception; a sense of propriety and proportion; a hatred of exaggeration; a shrinking from all that is gross, or personal, or vulgar; a love of what is excellent; an admiration of what is beautiful; above all, a hatred of sham, of pedantry, and of affectation.

Culture does not know everything: but it has a just attitude towards all true knowledge. It welcomes light from every quarter; is a foe to all narrowness and bigotry; and, however deep its roots be struck, is ever ready to admit that it may possibly be mistaken. The quality of humour, alas! by an unkindly fate, seems to have been denied to some; and yet we can scarcely admit that any one quite devoid of humour is capable of the highest cultivation, and we are often made to feel that one pinch of mother wit is

worth more than a ton of learning. In short, culture is not of the head only, but of the heart also, of the sentiment, of the fancy, of everything that makes up the intelligent, the joyous, the wayward, the breathing sentient thing called Humanity.

And now, what of that culture which peculiarly befits a woman? I am not bold enough to venture on a definition in the abstract; so let us suppose that on some happy occasion we find ourselves in the society of a cultivated woman. What are the fruits by which we shall know her?

We shall find her full of interest in all kinds of things, and full of sympathy; for in sympathy, intellectual as well as human, lies her especial power. She knows many things, and can throw herself, with a flexibility and an imagination seldom found in men, into various pursuits and situations. She has probably read a good deal, of many things, and in more languages than one; and she has certainly read well. She knows some of the greatest works in our own literature thoroughly well; she knows something about all the great names and all the great works of our literature; something, however little, about all the greatest names and the greatest works of all Western literatures. What she has read she has read with intelligence; it has not been poured in wholesale, or left undigested; she has a sense of the points made by a book or by an author; she has the beginnings, at least, of that discrimination which goes by the name of criticism.

The history of her own country she knows in a

very precise and accurate manner. You may perhaps floor her in a date, but she will not be far out, and she will know the general setting of any very important event; and she has a vivid perception of the aims and personalities of the great men or women who have been the makers of history. She is not over-disposed to believe in the Philosophy of History; but she will make many a home thrust at men's motives and characters which may make the learned person conversing with her suspect that textbooks and *a priori* theories are not the only guides to the understanding of human affairs. Not that she is deficient in general knowledge of these; she has some connected knowledge of the great movements of the human mind in science, or politics, or theology, according to her taste. She has looked at the world with open eyes, and knows something of the evil in it, and how to separate it from the good.

She will probably speak simpler, homelier, more picturesque English than her companion; if she have occasion to use French or German, she will pronounce them in such a way that she might possibly be understood by a Frenchman or a German. Latin or Greek she will *never* quote, however well she knows them; but if you make sly allusions to the great personages, the great books, the great myths of antiquity, you will find that they are appreciated.

She is modest and inquiring in her tone, rather than assertative; and the great difference between her and the Blue-stocking that used to excite the

ire and the irony of our forefathers is this, that she makes no pretence to knowledge which she does not possess. While her interests and her knowledge are wide and varied, you are soon made to feel that she has studied some subject or other—though you may not at once discover what subject—with accuracy and thoroughness ; and that she has a perfect sense of the distinction between that amount of knowledge which gives pleasure and interest to life, which develops sympathy and appreciation, and that which entitles one to speak as an authority. Need I add that she knows something of Art and its history, enough to enhance to her everywhere the interest of travel ; and that, if nature have so endowed her, she has an appreciative eye or ear for the beautiful in scenery, in architecture, in music ? She is not above needlework, useful or ornamental ; she will not despise the mysteries of the kitchen ; and if she have the good fortune to live in the country, will throw intelligence and interest into the garden, the dairy, or the farm.

Thus a cultivated woman is like a good old-fashioned Scotch garden. Inside, somewhat screened from view, are all the products of what our English friends call the kitchen-garden : the homely vegetables which feed the family kail-pot ; the native fruits of which the winter preserves are made ; but there is thyme and lavender in it, as well as carrots, turnips, and potatoes ; roses are not wanting ; and it is set all round with bright sweet-scented perennial flowers, which grow sweeter and richer as they grow older .

Let me assure you, ladies, that this is no fancy picture. You will not often, perhaps, find all these things in any one woman; but you will at least acknowledge that the woman I have described is not uncultivated. If any of you prefer a homelier and an older ideal of culture, let me remind you of a famous family of girls, who combined amongst them all its elements, and of whom some of us used to sing, in days gone by, linked hand in hand together:—

“Here’s a poor widow of Babylon,
With six young maidens all alone :
One can bake, and one can brew,
One can shape, and one can shew,
One can sit by the fire and spin,
One can make a bed for a king :
Come choose ye East, come choose ye West,
Come choose the one that ye lo’e best.”

Turning, however, from this simple, but out-worn ideal, we ask, By what studies is the cultivated woman of to-day to be developed? You will see from my realistic sketch that I place *Language*, *Literature*, and *History*, in the forefront, and in that order; of our own language and country first; of other countries, ancient or modern, as we may decide, according as each has wits, or taste, or leisure; that I require every woman to have gone through at the very least *one* subject of serious study, of as severe a kind as she has a mind for, in a thorough and scientific manner, to be studied not for information only, but as a mental discipline; that she may have a sense all her life through, whatever subject she may touch, of the profound chasm that

separates true knowledge—knowledge resting on an exact study of details and built up by consecutive logical methods—from that mere passing knowledge which is sufficient for most of the needs of life ; and that if ever she has occasion in life to make a real study of any subject, she may know how to set about it.

Some women, I do not deny, will find this one foundation subject—one at least, remember, is my demand—in Science or Mathematics ; nay, I will lay it down that some knowledge of Mathematics—some training in geometric or algebraic reasoning—is absolutely indispensable for all. Those who have tastes that way—especially those who look forward to the splendid field for woman's thought and work which lies in Medicine—will find themselves on Natural Science ; but for woman, as a whole, it is not to be doubted that the field of study, beyond all others, which most allies itself to her character and her tastes, to her present sympathies and to her probable future sphere of charm and usefulness, is the circle of the human subjects of study ; those which deal with the life, the history, the works, of man, rather than those which are concerned with the investigation of Nature.

Amongst these, the first place is held by Language, *the great instrument, the only instrument of thought* ; without which, as some hold, all thought, all knowledge were impossible : without which, if anything could be known, it certainly could not be communicated. Not merely *a* language, you will observe, but *Lang-*

guage. We cannot rest satisfied with knowing a language—or for that matter, half-a-dozen languages—merely for the purposes of communication. A man may know all the languages of Europe and remain an uncivilized barbarian, or fit only to be interpreter to a party of Mr. Cook's tourists. What we want is an analytic knowledge of the principles of language, of its logic, of the exact mental processes involved in the use of the various parts of speech, and of the various constructions, regular and irregular, in which they can be combined; a nice sense of the fine points of language, its clearness, force, conciseness, purity, rhythm; some appreciation of the difference in style between the best (oh ! how few they are !) and the worst (oh ! how bad they are !) of the letters which appear in our daily newspapers.

How is this knowledge to be acquired ? We may lay it down as an axiom that no one can know language in this sense who knows only one language; and that of all languages, one's own language (especially if it happen to be English) is the worst that can be chosen for the purpose. Self-analysis is notoriously the most difficult of all kinds of analysis; and the task of resolving into their abstract logical equivalents the words and constructions which have been on our lips since childhood is a very difficult kind of self-analysis. The elaboration, out of common sentences, of rules and principles which we know were not present to our minds in the framing of them, is an unnatural process, whose truth and use-

fulness it is very hard to bring home to the young mind ; and the phalanx of barbarous, semi-philosophical terms, and wholly-false distinctions, with which some of our most famous English Grammars bristle, is proof positive that the magnificent and untamed vitality of the English tongue was not designed to lend itself to fetters such as these.

There remain, practically, three languages to choose from—French, German, Latin ; and of these, for the purpose we have in view, Latin is incomparably the best. French, of course, must be known; good French is an absolute *sine qua non* of every lady's education; but it should be learnt at an early age, from French persons if possible, and then cultivated by constant reading. French, both as a colloquial and literary language, is a storehouse of fine idiom ; it is full of point and elegance; but one look at a French grammar, with its rules unnumbered and its exceptions twice as numerous as its rules, will show us how unfitted a vehicle it is for teaching the fundamental principles which are common to all tongues. German is more like what we want ; it has inflection ; it is logical in its structure, and though cumbrous, pedantic, and involved, is capable of affording an admirable educational discipline if studied, as it can be studied, with scientific thoroughness and exactness.

But in the great typical qualities which are the basis of all language: in logical symmetry and simplicity ; in obedience to great cardinal principles, of which the letter may sometimes apparently be

violated, but the spirit never; in that inexorable demand for accuracy which inflection produces, and which makes it impossible for an error or a confusion of thought to pass undetected;—in these points the Classical languages are incomparable. In addition, they exhibit all the qualities that make up style: simplicity, directness, truth, force, point, terseness, euphony—all the points in which modern language, modern English especially, ‘as she is written,’ is so often deficient.

The same great typical qualities distinguish the Literature, the History, the Philosophy, the Art of Antiquity. All is monumental, great, original; displaying the fundamental faculties of man as developed in two marvellously gifted races; man first risen to his strength, and exercising it on a fresh world, in which the ever-recurring problems of humanity presented themselves in clear and simple forms, unclouded by centuries of confused tradition, unencumbered by the chaos of details, the maze of interlocking causes, which make modern life so complex, modern books so innumerable, the formulating of great principles about modern affairs so difficult, originality of thought and language in dealing with them well-nigh impossible.

And must I add that there never *was* a time when a recall to the true, solid bases of all knowledge was more needed than the present?—never a time when a return to the simple truths of life, the great elemental feelings of humanity, was more urgently needed, if

Nature is not to be banished altogether by a sickly, uninstructed artificiality ? What meant the crazy rush some years ago of flighty, half-educated people towards what, with unconscious irony, was termed *aestheticism*, by those who never dreamt that the word itself meant properly a perception of Nature at first hand ? Why in poetry, in music, even in furniture, has the world been applauding the tortuous and the recondite, the grotesque and the affected, before it has learned to look at Nature face to face, and to admire her in her simplicity, her freshness, and her truth ? Why do we see and hear artificiality everywhere, homeliness and naturalness nowhere ? Why have we to listen to half-trained choirs attempting to display the embroidery of church music, for the benefit of congregations which can neither understand it nor take part in it, before they have learnt the plain sewing of their craft ? Why do we hear a quasi-learned jargon of art terms from people who have never learnt to draw, never looked reverently on the great masterpieces of the National Gallery ? It is because everywhere we are deserting Nature ; and if you would re-find her in letters, go look for her in the great masters of Greek and Roman Literature.

This point might be worked out elaborately in regard to each of the great human subjects of knowledge : Language, Literature, History, Philosophy, Art, Law. I have but time to give an illustration or two of the two first, and those taken from Latin only. I wish to show, if I can, (1) Why it is that Latin and Greek are

such admirable media for gaining a mastery over language in general, and hence over languages in particular ; (2) Why a study of their literature, contained as it is in so small a compass, is the best of all possible preparations for the study and appreciation of literature as a whole.

As regards Language, it is clear that the typical language, to be studied with a view to gaining a mastery over the principles of all languages, must possess in a high degree the qualities of accuracy, obedience to rational laws, simplicity, purity and clearness, flexibility, force, and elegance; and the language which possesses these qualities in the highest degree will be the best for educative purposes. The typical language, in short, must appeal as much as possible to the reason, as little as possible to mere memory ; it should be able to assign a reason, at every step, why this is wrong, that right ; why this is good in style, and why that is bad. Some years ago Mr. Goschen put the matter in this way :—You may take it from me that in every sentence which you translate from Greek or Latin, or into Greek or Latin, there are at least five times as many intellectual operations to perform as there are in a similar performance in English, French, or German.

Now, what does this mean ? It means this : in English, to grasp the meaning of a sentence, all that is needed is to know the meaning of each word separately ; the connection and the construction are indicated by the order. Of the words we use, a large proportion recur

continually, such as prepositions, articles, auxiliary verbs, etc.; as soon as these are learnt, all that has to be done in translating a new passage is to find out the meaning of the main words, *i.e.*, the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. I take at random the opening sentence of the article called "The Old Saloon" in this month's number of *Blackwood*, down to the first full stop. It contains seventy-three words in all. Of these, forty-four words consist of the stock little words, *as, to, of, so, the, which, in, and, very*, etc., which make up half our language. There remain twenty-nine words, each of which requires one intellectual operation to discover or remember its meaning. Thus, granted a knowledge of the small formative words, twenty-seven intellectual operations will put a modern reader (say a Frenchman) in possession of the meaning and the construction of the whole sentence. But in Latin it requires several intellectual operations to grasp the full meaning and connection of each inflected word; and the non-inflected words are very few in number. Take a sentence of two words only: *vellem mortuos*, 'I would that they were dead.' To understand this sentence thoroughly, a student must know (1) the person, (2) tense, (3) voice, (4) number, (5) mood, of the verb *vellem*; (6) that it comes from *volo*, meaning (7), "I wish"; and that (8) the subjunctive has here a particular shade of meaning. As to *mortuos*, he must know that it is (9) the accusative, (10) plural, (11) masculine, from (12) *mortuus*, meaning (13) "dead"; and (14) the reason why the accusative is necessary. In all, fourteen distinct intellectual opera-

tions for the proper comprehension of two words ! Let me illustrate this in another homely way, from which it will appear that in translating a Latin or Greek sentence a student may know quite correctly a large proportion of the points which must be known to get at the sense, and yet, from ignorance or misapprehension of the remainder, or from a failure to grasp the general drift of the context, make absolute shipwreck of the whole.

One of the chief solaces in the life of a Classical examiner is supplied by the delicious blunders of examinees; not blunders of blank ignorance, but blunders of intelligence; those which come from that sort of half-knowledge, or three-quarter knowledge, which leads a student whose imagination is unchastened by exact knowledge, once he has missed some essential point, to embark on a hopeless sea of conjecture and incongruity. The charm of such efforts lies not in the extent to which they are wrong, but in the extent to which they are right. One single error may drag in its train a whole catalogue of misapprehensions.

Thus, on Friday last, I was presented with the following translation of a line in Ovid, describing a hard frost—

“Sæpe sonant moti glacie pendente capilli,”

which means—

‘Often, if you shake your hair, the icicles which hang to it will rustle.’

The translation given was—

‘*The goats frequently get on to a glacier, and when it starts to slip away they send forth their voices.*’

In this translation one single letter, *e* read for *i*, has put the translator on to slippery ground; the slip once made, he started off, and descended in an avalanche of error.

Another, with more science, but less Latin, rendered the passage:—‘*At the same time from the overshadowing height the wild glaciers roar.*’

A favourite student of mine, now a distinguished man of letters, once translated four Latin words thus—

‘*A beautiful woman must obviously be well dressed.*’

The sentiment was irreproachable; but not so obvious was its connection with the original, which means—

‘*When a man goes out to battle he should leave his wife behind him.*’

And yet the translator had some correct knowledge about each of the four words of the original passage (*bella plane accinctis obeunda*, Tac. Ann. IV. 34). He was right in supposing that *bella* may sometimes mean ‘a beautiful woman’; that *plane*, means ‘obviously’; that *obeunda* indicates necessity; and that *accinctis* has something to do with dress. But not seizing the construction, not catching the drift of the thought, he failed to produce what Persius calls ‘a short half-ounce of right’ in the whole.

More remarkable still is a translation quoted to me a few weeks ago by an English headmaster. Juvenal is describing a dinner-party given by a Roman grandee, who feeds on sumptuous fare himself, while he has bad food and bad drink served to his poor dependants at the foot of the table :—

‘Vilibus anticipites fungi ponentur amicis,
Boletus domino ; sed quales Claudius edit
Ante illum uxoris, post quem nil amplius edit.’

The meaning is—

‘Before the poor dependants will be placed toad-stools of dubious quality ; before mine host, a lordly mushroom, of the sort that the Emperor Claudius ate, before that one administered to him by his wife, after which he ate nothing more,’ in allusion to the fact that the Emperor Claudius was poisoned by his wife, Agrippina, who chose his favourite dish of mushrooms as the vehicle for the poison. This was thus translated :—

‘*Let those who are in doubt be permitted to discharge their worthless friends ; let Boletus (the word for ‘mushroom,’ which, standing first in the line, has a capital letter) do the same to his master ; but then that was before Claudius ate his wife, after which he ate nothing more at all.*’

The exquisite beauty of this translation is that the writer knew the meaning of every word taken separately, except *Boletus* ; he has made sense ; and yet there is not one single word (excluding the five last words) in which he has not made an egregious blunder,

evincing a fundamental ignorance of the language. Yet, in fact, he knew just as much Latin as those worthy compatriots of ours know of French, who go blurting out their Anglo-Frankish lingo about the streets of Paris, quite pleased with themselves because they are understood by the waiters who have made a special study of that dialect.

In Latin or Greek you must be absolutely right, or you are not right at all; you must know the meaning, the construction, the position in the sentence, of every word—and every one of these things implies a separate intellectual act—or you cannot give the sense of the original; no half-knowledge, no breezy catching of the general sense, is of the slightest avail, for the passage says to you in its every word, '*You must know me not at all, or know me all in all.*' The man or woman who has mastered Latin or Greek knows language scientifically, and every other language theoretically is at their mercy.

So much for language merely as language. But if we take a wider view; if we regard the matter which language opens up to us, and the historic basis upon which much of our public and private life, much of our best thought and feeling, and most of our best modern literature ultimately rest, we must take a still stronger view of the commanding claims of Classical literature to a place among the studies of all cultivated persons. We must never forget that we are, in fact, the direct heirs and continuers of a civilization that had its origin in the basin of the Mediterranean—which was

developed, brought to perfection, and kept alive for centuries exclusively by those two nations and their influence—so that for us and all Western peoples the Classical languages must ever remain the basis upon which all literary study in the highest sense of the word must rest. In this proposition all the disputants on both sides in the recent struggle about Greek at Cambridge were united. The highest culture, for the highest minds, must rest, they all agreed, upon Greek and Latin ; it has been proved abundantly that the highest minds, with leisure and desire for the highest culture, are to be found amongst women as well as among men ; what need, therefore, to argue further before the students of Queen Margaret's College whether women should go to the Classical literature for their culture ?

In regard to Latin literature I could have wished to put before you in the original one or two typical examples of those qualities which I have assigned to it : its large statuesque proportions, its clearness and boldness of outline, its firm adherence to great principles, its disdain of the accidental, the elaborate, the affected ; the freshness, dignity, and pathos with which it portrays the fundamental incidents of man's life ; the purity and simple directness of its style, which recalls the famous saying that "True style is colourless like water." Some sense of all this—much knowledge of the contents and aims of the great books of antiquity—can be got from good translations by those who cannot study the originals ; but in a translation the exquisite flavour of the original is lost, like that of old wine left too

long uncorked ; and in works so artistic as the great masterpieces of Greece and Rome many of the fine points are lost to one who cannot appreciate the style.

Nevertheless, I will venture to put before you in my own words three passages from Latin authors, which you may take as specimens, respectively, of the beauty, of the force, and of the pathos with which a Roman writer could handle topics not strange to modern life, in the hope that should you find no trace of these qualities in the translation, you may be tempted to discover for yourselves whether I have ascribed them falsely to the originals.

The first is the well-known passage of Cicero about book-friends. After dealing with the Practical Man of those days, and showing the practical use of book-knowledge, in all the great walks of life, he goes on :—

‘ But, apart from all this, even if there were no such solid gains to be derived from study ; if we had no aim before us save that of pleasure only ; yet sure I am that you would deem these studies to be of all the most liberal and the most humane. For all other joys have their times, their seasons, and their place ; but these afford to youth its nourishment, to old age its joy ; they are our ornament in prosperity, our refuge and our solace in adversity ; they are our delight at home, they do not hinder us when upon foreign service ; they pass the long night hours with us, they are our companions in travel, they accompany us to our country homes.’

Next listen to what Juvenal says of the learned

woman, the Blue-stocking of his time; only remember that he was a determined woman-hater, and that I am not responsible for his opinions:—

‘ But of all women the most intolerable is she who, ‘ as soon as she is seated at the table, goes into raptures over Virgil, extends her pardon to the dying Dido, ‘ summons all the poets into her lists, and pits them ‘ the one against the other; on one side weighs the ‘ *Æneid*, on the other balances Homer in her scales. ‘ The professors fly before her; the lecturers on rhetoric give in; the whole company is dumb, not a lawyer, not an auctioneer among them can be heard; ‘ no, nor any other woman, so terrible is the cataract of ‘ her speech. You would suppose that every pot and ‘ every pan, and every bell in Rome, were being clashed ‘ in concert; no need now for the sounding of trumpets ‘ or of gongs, one sole woman can bring succour to the ‘ labouring moon ! ’

‘ She then discourses upon Virtue, and lays down ‘ definitions like a professor: if she would be thought ‘ thus eloquent and learned, why does she not tuck up ‘ her skirts, half-leg high, like an orator? or sacrifice ‘ a pig to Silvanus, like a poet? or bathe in the public ‘ baths, like a philosopher, for one penny?

‘ No; do not let the wife of your bosom know ‘ anything about rhetoric; let her not be one to whisk ‘ out in rounded sentences the crabbed “enthymeme”: ‘ let there be *some* history which she does not know, ‘ *some* few things in her reading which she does not ‘ understand. I hate the woman who has crammed up

‘ all the laws of grammar, and has them at her finger
‘ ends ; who never makes a slip in speaking, observing
‘ every rule and reason ; who burrows into antiquity, and
‘ quotes verses to me which I do not know ; who corrects
‘ her lady friends for provincialisms which no one would
‘ notice in a man. This, this at least may be the
‘ husband’s privilege, to make mistakes in grammar
‘ uncorrected ! ’

In strong contrast to this passage, I will venture to put before you a simple poem, the masterpiece of its writer, Propertius. It is the elegy of a noble Roman lady, spoken by herself ; and I choose it because it brings out with true Roman dignity, and with true poetic sympathy, an ideal essentially Roman ; one which deeply affected Roman life and history, which helped to preserve much that was noblest in Rome, even in the worst of times, yet one of which we can only catch glimpses as through a half-opened door—the ideal of a Roman matron.

Cornelia was a proud specimen of that proud class. She was the noblest of the noble by birth, by marriage, and by progeny. Her father, P. Cornelius Scipio, was of consular rank, descended from the two great Scipios of history ; one the conqueror of Hannibal, the other the destroyer of Carthage and Numantia. Her mother, Scribonia, was married to the Emperor Augustus ; she had a brother who was consul ; her husband, Paullus *Æ*Emilius Lepidus, of the great and ancient *Æ*Emilian House, filled the offices both of consul and of censor ; her two sons both became consuls in their time ; the younger

of them, Marcus, was pronounced by Augustus, in a famous epigram on his death-bed, to be *both worthy of empire and unwilling to assume it*.

Steeped thus from birth in all the great traditions of family pride and public patriotism — seeing father, brother, husband, all moving in the highest places as by natural right—and rearing her own sons to follow in their steps, Cornelia is a type of the proud Roman dame: pure in life; proud in her motherhood; unknown to the world outside, yet full of the imperial instincts of a governing race; devoted to her household and her home, yet quitting them, though still young, with a stern serenity, uncheered by the hope of immortality, but strong and undismayed in the sense that she has done her duty, and lived up to the highest ideal of her class.

She speaks in the world below, about to meet her judges; but her spirit still hovers about the pyre where she was reduced to ashes, and she takes leave of all her dear ones as from her death-bed.

Weep not for me, Paullus.

‘ Cease, Paullus, to weigh down my tomb with tears: ‘ no prayer can open the black gate of Death; for when ‘ once the spirit has passed into the realm below, it ‘ treads a path of adamant that knows no yielding. Thy ‘ cry may be heard by the Lord of those dusky halls, ‘ yet thy tears will fall unheeded on a deaf shore. The ‘ Gods above may hear; but when once the Ferryman ‘ has touched his fare, the dark door beyond the shaded ‘ pyre is shut. What availed me then that I was

‘wedded to a Paullus ? what availed the triumphant
‘chariots of my sires, or all these pledges of my fame ?
‘Were the Fates more kindly to Cornelia for *these* ?
‘Behold me now, ashes for one hand to hold.’

I die young, but guiltless ; I care not who is my judge.

‘Ah ! thou accursed darkness, and ye shallow sluggish
‘pools ! ye waters that curl around my feet ! before my
‘time, but guiltless, I come hither. May the Father
‘pass gentle sentence on my spirit ! Or if some *Æacus*
‘be judge, with urn before him, let *him* pronounce just
‘doom upon me ; let Minos and Radamanthus sit beside
‘him, and by Minos’ seat, in hushed court, let the grim
‘Furies take their stand. Sisyphus ! stay thy stone !
‘Let Ixion’s wheel stand still ! Let Tantalus drink,
‘ye evasive waters ! Let greedy Cerberus attack no
‘shades to-day, but lie tongue-tied, his chain loose, the
‘gate unbarred. I plead my own cause : if I speak
‘false, may I bear that cruel pitcher of the Danaids.’

Whose sires more famed than mine ? Whose life more pure ?

‘If ever man reaped glory through the triumphs of
‘his sires, Africa and Numantia tell of mine. Not
‘fewer the names of honour in my mother’s house, the
‘house of Libo ; each house stands firm on titles of its
‘own.

‘Soon, when my maiden robe gave place to marriage
‘torch, and a matron’s fillet bound my hair, I was
‘wedded to thee, Paullus, thus, thus to part : this
‘stone shall tell I wedded none but thee. By the
‘ashes of those sires, whom thou, Rome, must needs

‘ hold dear, whose titles tell of Africa borne to
‘ dust ; by Perses, who boasted Achilles for his sire,
‘ and by him who broke thy house, Perses, though
‘ Achilles was thy sire: I swear that Censor’s law was
‘ never strained for me, that your hearths never blushed
‘ for stain of mine. Cornelia brought no tarnish to your
‘ spoils ; of a great house herself, herself a great ex-
‘ ample to it.

‘ Through life I changed not ; I never knew reproach ;
‘ from marriage torch to torch of funeral I lived un-
‘ spotted. For a law was laid on me by Nature in my
‘ blood : it was no fear of judge that kept me true.
‘ However strict the verdict passed on me, no woman
‘ will be soiled that sits beside me ; not Claudia, that
‘ matron rare who with rope pulled Cybele, the tower-
‘ crowned goddess, from the shoal ; not *Æ*Emilia, that
‘ Vestal, whose white robe rekindled Vesta’s fires.

Have I ever harmed thee, mother, save by my death ?

‘ No hurt to thee, dear heart, my mother, did I bring ;
‘ would’st thou change aught in me, save that I die ?
‘ A mother’s tears, a city’s sorrow sound my praise ;
‘ Cæsar himself bewailed me ; and as he cried that I was
‘ meet to be his daughter’s sister, we saw the tears course
‘ down that God-like face.

Sons, brother, daughter, all have brought honour to my name.

‘ I have reaped honour from my children. I am torn
‘ from no empty home. Thou, Lepidus, my son, and
‘ thou, Paullus, my comfort after death, on your breasts
‘ my eyes were closed. I grieve not that my bark is

‘loosed, leaving all these dear ones to bring fresh honours
‘to me. Sure this is woman’s highest glory and reward,
‘that Praise speak freely over her pyre.

Husband, be tender to our children.

‘And now, my husband, I commend to thee our
‘common joy, our sons ; my love still breathes for them,
‘fast-burnt into my ashes. Fill thou a mother’s place
‘to them ; they must now all hang upon thy neck. If
‘thou kiss them as they weep, add thou their mother’s
‘kiss ; the whole house is now a burden upon thee. If
‘thou lament for me at all, let them not be by to see ;
‘dry thy cheek when they come near thee, and cheat
‘them with a kiss. Enough that thou wear out the
‘nights in grieving, and that thy dreams fashion shapes
‘into my form ; when in secret thou speakest to my
‘picture, speak each word as though I would answer thee
‘again.

*My sons, if your father wed again, bear with his wife, and win
her to you by love ; if he wed not, comfort him.*

‘And ye, my sons, if a new marriage bed be strewed
‘in the hall, and a careful stepmother be seated on my
‘couch, bear with your father’s wife ; speak kindly of
‘her, and praise her ; your gentleness shall win her
‘to you. Nor praise your mother over-much ; the
‘praise of me will turn to bitterness for her.

‘But if he be content with me and my memory,
‘and deem me of so much worth when gone, learn ye
‘betimes to feel for his coming age ; take pain out of his
‘widowed years. The years that I have lost, be they

‘added to yours ; so will ye help my Paullus to a glad
‘old age. All, all is well ; I never sorrowed for lost
‘child ; every child of mine was present at my
‘funeral.

Mourners, arise !

‘My cause is said. Arise, ye weeping witnesses, till
‘the glad earth pays its tribute for my life. Others
‘have won Heaven by their lives ; enough for me that
‘I be borne in honoured equipage to the grave.’

A glimpse at passages such as these may perhaps suffice to make you feel that if Latin be a dead language, its literature may still speak to us with living force, may sound chords of human feeling, and touch problems of human life, which are of present and eternal interest to us all. So long as man exists upon this earth, the highest thought and the highest feeling of each generation amongst us will find nurture, directly or indirectly, in the priceless remains of the great minds of Greece and Rome ; and I call upon you, as students of a College which aspires to University standing, to study these at their fountain head. If you are to succeed, as succeed you will, your aims must be high ; living as you do in a city like this, in which the men are all busy, in which all material forces appear to be in the ascendant, but in which the women have money, leisure, fine physique, and fine brains, as they have in few places in the world, I say it will be an everlasting shame if you do not make this College a great centre of intellectual light, and do honour to your generous founders, your enthusiastic workers, by build-

ing round the old University of Glasgow a College of woman's learning and woman's culture, which shall hold high in every field the torch of sound knowledge, and make this city of ours as famous for the solid acquirements, the cultivated taste, and the true womanly development of her daughters, as she has long been famed for the energy and enterprise of her sons.





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